

**I. PREFACE**

1. Here I present a collection of practical tips for prophetic ministry but also pieces of advice for the prophetic in general. They are meant mainly for hands-on, eye-to-eye prophetic ministry in one-on-one or team ministry settings.
2. I have found it helpful and encouraging to frequently remind myself and the prophetic teams in which I serve of these simple facts. They are designed to improve the quality of your prophetic words and ministry times and to keep you from the many pitfalls of this supernatural ministry.

**II. LIST OF PRACTICAL TIPS AND PIECES OF ADVICE FOR PROPHETIC MINISTRY**

1. **Remember the most common ways God speaks during prophetic ministry** – Although there are countless ways in which God speaks to us, in prophetic ministry these are the most common: Word of God, impressions (inner knowing), inner images, vision (animated images), hearing (mostly internal) and feeling (emotional and physical). In prophetic ministry try to stay tuned in to all of these ways.
2. **Tune in to non-favorite revelation channels** – Don't forget to pay attention to ways of revelation that don't come to you that easily or that God doesn't use often to speak to you. For instance, if God often gives you pictures, also try to tune in to physical sensations, etc. God likes to speak in different ways to draw us out of our comfort zone.
3. **Always ask God for an interpretation** – One of the mistakes I encounter often in prophetic ministry is that people share revelation as soon as they get it without asking God for an interpretation of what they got. For instance they get an image of an ascending hot air balloon and share the picture without really knowing what it means. In my personal experience, and having observed several prophetic people and ministries, most of the time (perhaps 95%) God also gives the interpretation to a revelation if we ask Him for it. That's because God is not a God of riddles. There are only very few instances where God leaves us with raw revelation without telling us what it means.
4. **If you get the interpretation, skip the revelation** – When God gives you the interpretation to a picture or phrase, then it's recommended to just share the meaning and not the revelation itself (unless you specifically feel led to do so). Reasons: 1) In most cases the revelation itself doesn't contribute any additional information to what God communicates through the interpretation. 2) Especially when ministry time is limited, sharing the raw data takes up extra time that could be used listening or sharing interpreted (and thus more helpful) prophetic words. 3) Often God uses personal symbolism that means something to us but not necessarily to the one we minister to. He wants *us* to understand so that we adequately get the message He wants to communicate to the one we are ministering to.
5. **Don't interpret when you don't get an interpretation** – On the rare occasion that you only get a raw revelation but no interpretation, don't yield to the temptation to interpret it yourself. It's just too easy to apply ways God has used this symbol or phrase before. If you're stuck with an image, sensation, Bible verse, etc. and after asking you simply don't seem to get an interpretation, then just share the raw revelation – describe the picture, the feeling, share the phrase, word or Bible verse. Also don't share possible meanings. It's not really helpful to give 2 or 3 different possible interpretations of a symbol, it only blurs the prophetic word. We don't get the meaning because God uses personal words and imagery of the person receiving and not ours. They will understand even if we don't. In those cases, the raw revelation is more than sufficient and often speaks more than you could ever express yourself.
6. **Trust the still, small voice** – Don't wait till you feel certain that it was God's voice. Such a place of

certainty simply doesn't exist. The prophetic is always a step of faith and a taking of risks. Even high level prophets don't get anything but that most of the time: some small impression, easily overheard and neglected. But they respond. The quality of your prophecies doesn't depend on the quality of your revelation but on the quality of your faithfulness.

7. **Go with the first thing you receive** – The first thing you get is most likely the right thing. I often observe myself discarding many impressions and pictures that I didn't think would fit or of which I wasn't certain it was God. Don't yield to the temptation to ask again and again till you get something that sounds powerful, meaningful or adequate. Some people barely give prophetic words because they second-guess everything all the time. Was it God or just my thoughts? I found that God mostly answers faster than I could think and that the first thing I get after asking Him for a word is usually the right thing. Go with what you get first. This is trusting that God speaks when we ask.
8. **God always speaks** – Sadly, many Christians picture God as one who often stays silent (for a big variety of reasons they can find). This however is a very destructive paradigm of God that will hinder us from hearing Him especially in times when we need it most. God is never silent. He is the Word (John 1:1) who upholds all things by His word (Hebr 1:3), the word by which we live (Mt 4:4). There may be particular issues that God might not talk about for a seasons, but He never just says nothing. In His indefinite love and knowledge, there are indefinite things He has to tell us.
9. **You hear more easily and clearly in His presence** – We hear clearer and more frequently in a context of prayer and worship. That's because it naturally attunes us to the presence, character and voice of God. Immersing ourselves in a context of adoration before and during ministry (and making this the constant posture of your heart) will sharpen your spiritual senses like nothing else.
10. **We hear Him more when we expect Him to speak** – We will hear more when we have the expectation that God will speak. When I have a hard time hearing God's voice it's mostly because I lack the expectation to hear Him caused by wrong attitudes (like being distracted, condemnation, etc.). We have to believe that God rewards us with His voice when we seek Him for it (Hebr 11:6; Mt 7:9-11).
11. **Listen for yourself** – Don't only seek to hear God for others, learn to hear primarily for yourself. It's much harder to hear Him tell something about ourselves and trust what He said than when we prophesy over others. We don't primarily learn to hear God's voice for ministry but for intimacy! The highest and immediate purpose of the prophetic is that you would personally get to know the heart of God. From there you can minister much more powerfully.
12. **90 % love, 10 % instruction** – Many Christians seek God primarily for instruction. But God is much more interested in lovers than in workers. About 90 % of what He tells us is about His heart and love for us. Only about 10 % are instructions. That's because we are first His beloved and He is first a lover (Mt 22:38; Jn 15:15). He wants to build friendships so much more than a work force. This is equally true in prophetic ministry.
13. **Prophecy out of His emotions** – Even when prophesying over others, let your most frequently asked question be “God, what do You feel about this person?” and not “God, what do You want them to do?” While both are important aspects, our goal in prophetic ministry is to connect people with the heart of God, not only with His plans. Also, when people know God's heart, they will inevitably discover His plans for their life. That's basically killing two birds with one stone.
14. **Prophecy with Scripture** – When giving a prophetic word, ask for specific Bible verses that are on God's heart in context to what He is saying. God's written Word is prophetic in its core and powerful when used in the prophetic ministry. It draws people into His Word and makes specific verses dear to them. To me – and many others – a prophecy is often much more valuable when it involves His Word.

15. **Prophecy to the measure of your faith** – When Paul talked about the prophetic, he said that each should use this gift according to the measure of their faith (Rom 12:6). When we serve other people prophetically, we shouldn't venture out into areas that are way the scope of our maturity and authority in our prophetic gifting/calling. God will most likely not use a young still inexperienced believer to give prophecies of national importance. There are also areas in the lives of other people that may be out of limit for us as long as we don't have the maturity in our gifting and a specific calling to prophecy over these areas. A general rule: If you heard a similar prophetic word for yourself and you would have a hard time believing it then don't give it to someone else.
16. **No mates, dates, babies and offices** – This is a practical application of the previous piece of advice. We should generally refrain from giving prophecies about mates, specific dates (like “in 3 days, this and this will happen”), babies and offices (like apostolic office, prophetic office, etc.; you can talk about giftings, though) as long as you are not specifically called to do so. These are very intimate topics where a lot of harm can be done and a lot of pain is inflicted if they turn out to not be true. Not prophesying over these areas is not a general “no go” as there is no biblical command that tells us so. But it's one of the rules that many prophetic ministries seem to have and to me it seems wise to do it too. Because most of the time we will not be in a place of closeness, accountability and authority to really give direction in these areas. If at all, it might be more appropriate in a close friendship situation, but even then I would really stress the vagueness of the word and exhort the friend to carefully check the word. When speaking into those emotional areas, we should understand the potential damage that a wrong prophetic word (or even just a wrong interpretation) can cause.
17. **Avoid expressions like “God says”** – Don't use absolute phrases like that. Rather say “I feel like...”, “I get the sense that...” and so on. This is one of the established rules for prophetic ministry. Using phrase like “God says” puts unnecessary pressure on the person receiving and robs them of the right to test all prophetic words for themselves (1 Thess 5:20-21). We are to create an atmosphere that gives the person the freedom to test and discard a prophetic word we give. The Bible makes it clear that it's the receiver, not the person ministering, who eventually has to decide whether a word is from God or not. The question it also comes down to is: Are you really that certain that this word is fully and genuinely from God? And if it later becomes apparent that it wasn't, will you take full responsibility to set things right and to unmake all damage caused by it? It's a very dangerous place to claim this level of certainty and infallibility. And it's absolutely unnecessary to do so. If it was from God, the recipient will know.
18. **Create a warm, safe and honoring atmosphere** – Receiving prophetic ministry is a very vulnerable place to be. Many people don't know what to expect. Some may have a history of negative experiences, others may be very critical about the prophetic in general. We have to take all this into account when ministering to others. Our goal should therefore be to create an atmosphere where people from all these backgrounds feel safe, appreciated and handled with care and honor.
19. **Watch your gestures and facial expressions** – One way to create a safe atmosphere is to use your gestures and facial expressions appropriately. Be yourself but try not to be overwhelming or intimidating. Some people tend to have quite an intense and penetrating look in their eyes when ministering prophetically. Others can be overwhelming with their enthusiasm and overly expressive gestures. The perfect measure is to use your hands and face as tools to convey the message God wants to give in a way that all sorts of people can feel safe, welcome and appreciated. Smile every once in a while, be open, friendly, approaching and kind. Don't forget, ministering in the prophetic is one expression of the second great commandment – to love people like yourself (Mt 22:39).
20. **Refrain from physical contact unless you specifically asked for permission** – Not everyone appreciates physical contact, and not everyone experiences it the same way. Don't lay on hands, hug or do anything else unless it's appropriate and you specifically asked for permission to do so. As a

general rule: Do only what's appropriate for the level of familiarity to the person you are ministering to. If it's a person you have never met before, a hug may not be the way to go. When ministering to people you don't know, you should also take into account that there are many people who associate body contact with traumatic experiences of physical abuse. Even a hand on the shoulder can hurt them more than you expect. So ask for permission first. Also, prophetic ministry just like healing ministry is generally not the place to be touchy-feely.

21. **Prophecy the positive** – Don't give negative words in prophetic ministry – we don't accuse or expose specific sins and we don't mention demonic/satanic activity. This is a very important point and has much to do with honoring the person we minister to by not exposing them and with understanding our servant position (Mt 23:11). The purpose of the prophetic is edification, exhortation and consolation (1 Cor 14:3). We don't want to sow accusation, condemnation, fear or discouragement because that's not the character of God (Rom 8:1). Someone once said, you don't need a gift to see the rubbish in someone's life but to see the treasure amidst the rubbish. If you think God showed you a specific sin of someone else, think of God's activity as having two sides: to decrease sin and increase holiness. They are basically the same thing and it's best to focus on the latter one. Instead of exposing the sin, call forth the opposite. For instance, instead of telling someone he has a problem with lying, tell them that God wants to make him a bold speaker of truth. Surprisingly, the person will understand naturally which sin God puts His finger on, but also gets a sense of purpose and hope. Also you don't expose the person in front of your team members. And another advantage it has for you: in case you misheard, you don't falsely accuse someone of a sin that he hasn't committed. All in all, it doesn't mean we never call sin by name, but we have to realize that prophetic ministry is not an inner healing session.
22. **Don't judge your prophecy by the existence or absence of a sense of anointing** – A sense of anointing on a prophetic word (or lack thereof) is no evidence for its validity. Personally I can only recount three occasions over the course of my life where I felt a really strong, distinct sense of anointing prior to (or during) giving the prophetic word. But these three words haven't really been the most significant and important words I've given. I'm often reminded of John Wimber, known for his miraculous healing ministry, who said that he never ever feels anything when operating in his gift. It's good if you do, but don't depend on it. Because God doesn't.
23. **Don't compare yourself** – Comparing yourself will make you self-conscious and cloud your senses for the voice of God. Don't compare yourself, neither on good days nor on bad days. Don't even compare yourself with how you did in the past. Everyone has ups and downs but you can only work with what you have at the moment. God rewards when we use even the little we have (Mt 25:23). I remember a night in ministry when I thought my prophecies that night were just weak and ridiculous. I felt I was lacking behind of what I was used to and called to. However at the end of the night, more people than usual had told me how much the words they'd received meant to them. Never compare yourself! In your weakness His strength is made perfect (2 Cor 12:9).
24. **Take it easy, especially on tough days** – There are simply days when we really have a hard time tuning in to God. Take it easy. Don't pressure yourself. On days like these I try to go back to some easy and fun prophetic activation exercises that help me connect with God and get it flowing. (More here: <http://yearningheartsjourney.blogspot.com/2012/02/prophetic-activation-exercises.html>)
25. **God often uses what He is speaking to you personally at the moment** – Sometimes God uses things He is impressing on your heart personally in a specific season. In the beginning I really had a problem with that because I thought I just made it up and it would simply be on my mind because it's very important to myself right now. But sometimes, of course not always, God wants to speak the same thing to someone else and He uses you because for you this revelation is very fresh and personal.

26. **God has humor** – Don't be thrown off when God gives you a prophetic word for someone else that sounds funny. Humor isn't foreign to God. I remember an occasion where we ministered to a girl and I got the word that she is like a specific Starbucks beverage and an interpretation of it. I first hesitated because it sounded so odd, but I still remember the light in her eyes when I told it. Actually this image and the interpretation helped bring healing to her heart that was aching at the moment from a very intense, emotional and personal prophecy she had gotten just minutes before. She felt God's favor, love, and good plans over her, now and for the future.
27. **Forget what you think you know about a person or what seems to be apparent** – I know that's actually "prophecy 101" but I have to repetitively remind myself of this simple fact. Even when a word simply doesn't seem to fit from my perspective, God sees the heart (1 Sam 16:7) and knows/sees so much more than I do. It happened to me way too often that I thought a word to be strange and unfitting and didn't say it, but then someone else from the team did and I regretted my silence. Every now and then God challenges us to risk something by giving us prophetic words that are contrary to what we perceive with our senses.
28. **Prophetic team ministry and building on each other's words** – Try to minister with a team as often as possible. We prophesy in part (1 Cor 13:9), so if you want deeper and more complex prophetic words then find people to prophesy with. One thing that I always encourage prophetic teams is to build on the prophetic words given. What I mean by that is that we don't all listen for prophetic words and then give 10 to 20 different, completely unrelated prophecies. Instead if someone from our team gets a prophetic word for the person we are serving, the other team members ask God for more revelation about the word given. "God, what does this symbol mean? In which way are You gonna do that? What is Your purpose? Show me more." As we flow together and ask God to reveal more, we can contribute to and build on the word of someone else and consequently go very deep in what God has to say. Thus, the person prophesied over gets 2-3 big, comprehensive words instead of dozens of small ones. From all the tips I mention here, this is one of the dearest to me because the richness and anointing in the prophetic ministry when serving as a team is simply amazing.
29. **Keep your words short** – Keep your prophecies as concise as possible. Avoid long expositions and explanations. Say what God put on your heart – no more and no less. Short and simple things, when originating from God, will impact the person much more than a long explanation that clouds the main points God wanted to communicate. Since it's their life God is speaking into, they will understand the word much better than you anyway. With or without explanations they will intuitively make the right connections because the Spirit is not only working through you but also within them.
30. **Prophetic intercession** – When you're alone at home, take time to pray for people you know. Ask God to show you what to pray for and then intercede on their behalf and God's heart and plans for them. This is called prophetic intercession as you depend on the specific guidance of the Holy Spirit. You may later share what you prayed for and specific words of encouragement, Bible verses, etc. with the person you prayed for.
31. **Prophetic prayer** – When you pray for someone during a ministry time. Don't do all rapid fire like prayer but take time to listen to what God has to say, what God wants you to pray for. You don't even have to tell the person that God told you something. Just pray it out over this person without labeling it as a prophecy.
32. **Don't stop practicing** – Never stop using and growing in your prophetic gifts. Your ability to discern God's voice will grow as you simply sharpen your senses through constant practice (Hebr 5:14).